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District of Arizona*

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FORMER TRIBAL CHILD CARE DIRECTOR INDICTED FOR THEFT OF \$141,979 IN DAYCARE FUNDS

PHOENIX - A federal grand jury here returned a one-count indictment today against the former director of the White Mountain Apache Tribe's Child Care and Development Services. Sadie Thomas-Burnette, 51, of Hondah Homesites on the White Mountain Apache Reservation, has been charged with Theft Concerning Programs Receiving Federal Funds. This indictment is the result of an investigation conducted by the FBI.

The indictment alleges that between April 2001 and February 2003 while serving as director of all of the children's programs on the reservation, Thomas-Burnette transferred \$141,979 from a tribal day care center bank account into two personal accounts held in the names of Thomas-Burnette and two others.

U.S. Attorney Paul Charlton said that "it is a terrible misuse of public authority and trust to steal taxpayer funds that are intended to benefit children and families with children."

Special Agent in Charge Jana D. Monroe stated, "Though the FBI, since September 11, 2001, has shifted many of its resources to focus on terrorism matters, the FBI has actually added to the number of Special Agents working within the Indian Country Program. Additionally, combating public corruption on all levels is one of the Bureau's top priorities. This investigation, among others conducted by the FBI and local tribal police, reveals the FBI's commitment to combating Public Corruption." SAC Monroe added, "Agents involved in this investigation were assisted by the White Mountain Apache Tribal Police, and we are grateful for their agency's partnership with the FBI."

A conviction for Theft Concerning Programs Receiving Federal Funds carries a maximum penalty of ten years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both. An indictment is the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until a jury determines that a defendant's guilt has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

The prosecution is being handled by Howard Sukenic and Frank T. Galati, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-05-1354-PCT
RELEASE NUMBER: 2005-226(Thomas-Burnette)

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